

Council of Regions Meeting Notes November 15, 2007

The Council of Regions met via conference call. Chairman Steve Martin opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Three topics were added. On the call were Steve Martin (Snake River), Mark Wachtel (Northeast), Brian Abbott (RCO), Alex Conley (Yakima), Scott Brewer (Hood Canal), John Sims (Coast), Steve Leider (GSRO), Chris Drivdahl (GSRO), Derek VanMarter (Upper Columbia), Jeff Breckel and Melody Teresky (Lower Columbia).

2008 State of Salmon Focus Watersheds

Regional organizations have selected their focus watersheds for the report:

- Tucannon (Snake River)
- Methow (Upper Columbia)
- Naches (Yakima)
- Skokomish (Hood Canal)
- Washougal (Lower Columbia)
- Nisqually (draft, Puget Sound)

In the last report, these watersheds were examined through a recovery lens. If that is not the direction that the 2008 report takes, the Northeast and Coastal regions may be asked to highlight a watershed as well.

Monitoring Forum

Regional organizations have previously requested products from the Forum. COR will look at this list – and the response from the Forum – to determine if there are additional needs, products that continue to need work, etc. It would be useful for the Forum to hear particularly from the Columbia Basin organizations, since there are several presentations from Puget Sound groups scheduled for the upcoming December meeting.

- **Action:** Chris will send list of requested actions and those taken by forum to COR. Steve, Alex, and Jeff will work on a presentation to Forum representing regions for next meeting.

Habitat Work Schedule

COR members discussed the Habitat Work Schedule (HWS) and the LEAG meeting presentation by WDFW yesterday. While the HWS clearly has utility for lead entities tracking specific projects, regional organizations are struggling to understand how to use it to help address broader delisting and recovery actions. There is considerable concern/question over WDFW's intent to increase Lead Entity contracts and then require them to immediately give it back to the HWS consultant. Regions are concerned that the HWS product will not regional needs, and that regions that are also Lead Entities will have a continuing contractual responsibility to pay for the product. Regional representatives agreed to articulate common concerns and write a letter asking WDFW to answer some questions: What is the intent of the program? What are reasonable expectations regions can have of HWS? What are the needs and concerns shared by regions? It was also noted that WDFW presented draft legislation to LEAG the previous

day that would expand the role of Lead Entities and the HWS from a focus on salmon recovery to covering watershed and ecosystem health.

- **Action:** Melody will draft a letter and distribute to COR members for review and concurrence. Alex will send draft legislation to COR members

2008 Regional Board Members' Policy Summit

COR reiterated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues of common interest among board members. It should be 1 day and in the Lower Columbia area. Attendees include regional boards and lead entities. This is a policy meeting, a time for board members to strategize on the central theme: What does it take to successfully implement recovery plans? The planning committee includes Steve, Jeff, Brian, Susan Z and Chris.

- **Action:** Set a date in late May. Melody will help locate facilities once date is selected. Draft agenda with some presentations on information that will help the boards do their policy and strategy work. Keep it high level!

COR Website

OFM has agreed to set up a site nested within the GSRO site. It will look similar to the Oil Spill Advisory Committee. The site will include at least the following:

Description of COR (who you are, what you do, etc.)

Summary of each region + photos

Email addresses for each regional organization

Direct links to regional websites

Proposals, letters, and other material presented to SRFB that represent collective regional views

Announcement, agenda, etc for Policy Summit

Annual COR meeting schedule

- **Action:** Each region will send material to Chris by December 15 for inclusion on the website. Website "live" target is January 2.

Funding Task Force

The funding task force prepared a paper details a preliminary proposal for a statewide analysis of salmon recovery funding needs. Columbia Basin regions expressed reservations about being scooped up into a statewide analysis right out of the blocks. They prefer each region to do their own research, then roll up to a Basin-wide approach, then to a statewide piece. All recognized a statewide vision is essential, it's just how we get there that is important. GSRO, when staffing permits, will be assisting in the evaluation and roll up and consistency of approach.

- **Action:** No specific actions beyond what regions are already doing to analyze this issue. GSRO may be able to provide more assistance early next year.

Priority Work and or Information Sharing Topics

GSRO has the results of the informal poll.

- **Action:** Phil will send out the list. COR members should pick top elements and use to generate work plan

Quarterly Report Templates

Quarterly reports are “contract quarters” not “annual quarters.”

- **Action:** Chris is working on the template and it should be done soon. It will take the items from regional contracts, including milestones, and ask some simple questions (Did you complete the task? If not, why? Are you experiencing any obstacles?)

Review Panel Availability

COR members like the concept of having the review panel available year around and creating more flexibility in the grant review and approval process. RCO is working on better defining its proposal. This should not translate into regions having to hold 4 TAC meetings a year!

- **Action:** Brian is developing a memo to SRFB for the December 13-14 meeting, available Nov 30.

Regional Allocation Percentages Refinement

RCO is developing background information on the process used to determine regional project funding allocations. They intend to present a paper to the SRFB with 3 options for consideration – 1. Go to full allocation recommendation from ITF; 2. Tweak transitional; and, 3. Stay the same. Any changes that increase one region will result in decline somewhere else. LEAG discussed this yesterday, but didn’t establish a recommendation at their meeting. There is not a clear consensus among regional organizations about what the allocations should be. Most are uncomfortable with offering cuts to their present allotment, but there could be some movement there if the right incentives were offered. COR agreed they would like to go on the record for the SRFB’s consideration at their December meeting.

- **Action:** RCO will send out its recommendations to the SRFB on November 30. Each region will individually review and send their comments to Chris (informally, email) by COB December 6th. Chris will synthesize and try to find common elements and themes, and send back to regions by COB December 7th. There will be a COR conference call December 10th 9-10:30 to discuss.

SRFB Policy Refinements

RCO is working on some refinements to existing SRFB policies, as well as investigating some new ones. One with significant impact on regions is unspent regional allocations – do you roll into next year, or (as now happens) default to general pot? There are two kinds of unspent funds – projects that come in under budget, and those that aren’t ever allocated to projects. If SRFB goes to a year-round science panel, they could move to year-round allocations rather than one big meeting. If unspent money is maintained in a regional allocation pot, it could inject more fiscal responsibility into project lists. On the other side, there are also cost increase requests amount to about 1% of total pot annually. Will regions be responsible for those as well? This would present significant accounting issues for all, especially those regions that are not lead entities. This issue is also linked to regional percentage allocations.

- **Action:** COR will embed some comments regarding unspent regional allocations in letter to SRFB on regional percentage allocations.

Land Use

Snake River region is working with the Blue Mountain Land Trust on a series meetings that look at how to link salmon recovery with growth management efforts and tools.

Hood Canal has been working in this same vein and may have some things to offer, and may be interested in participating to learn what is going on in other parts of the state.

Lower Columbia says protection is a critical element for their plan and restoration may be less effective without it, so they are interested as well.

- **Action:** Steve offered to work with folks and keep them informed through COR. This is an important issue statewide.

Annual Calendar

COR will meet the third Thursday each month, with every odd month a conference call, and every even month an in person meeting, unless cancelled.